

Joint area review

Torbay Children's Services Authority Area

Review of services for children and young people

Adult Learning Inspectorate
Audit Commission
Commission for Social Care Inspection
Healthcare Commission
HM Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate
HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
HM Inspectorate of Court Administration
HM Inspectorate of Prisons
HM Inspectorate of Probation
Ofsted

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Introduction

1. This joint area review was conducted using the arrangements required under Section 20 of the Children Act 2004. It was carried out by a multi-disciplinary team of eight inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), the Healthcare Commission (CHAI), the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) and the Audit Commission. The review was undertaken according to the requirements of the *Framework for the Inspection of Children's Services*.

2. The review was linked to the contemporaneous corporate assessment of the local council by the Audit Commission and its findings are represented in the relevant part of the corporate assessment report. The review was also conducted at the same time as an inspection of Torbay's Youth Offending Team.

3. This review describes the outcomes achieved by children and young people growing up in Torbay and evaluates the way local services, taken together, contribute to their well-being. Joint area reviews focus on the extent to which children and young people are healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution, and are well prepared to secure economic well-being.

4. The review evaluates the collective contribution made to each outcome for children and young people by relevant services in the area. It also judges the contributions made by the council's services overall and, specifically, its education and children's social care services. Particular attention is given to joint action by local services on behalf of those groups of children and young people who are vulnerable to poor outcomes. Two such groups are covered in detail: children and young people who are looked after by the council; and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

5. The review took place in two stages consisting in total of three weeks over a seven week period. The first stage reviewed all existing evidence including:

- self-assessment undertaken by local public service providers
- a survey of children and young people
- performance data
- the findings of the previous inspection of the youth service
- planning documents
- information from the inspection of local settings, such as schools and day-care provision
- evidence gathered during the concurrent Youth Offending Team inspection
- briefings from staff within inspectorates, commissions and other public bodies in contact with local providers.

6. The second stage included inspection fieldwork. This included studies of how far local services have improved outcomes for a small sample of children and young people, some of whom have the most complex needs, and a study of provision in two neighbourhoods (Ellacombe and Tormohun) in Torquay. It also included gathering evidence on six key judgements, selected because of their critical importance to improving outcomes for children and young people in the local area. This included discussions with elected members of the local authority and their equivalents in other public agencies, officers from these agencies, service users, and community representatives. A review of case files for children and young people receiving support from a number of local agencies was also included.

Context

7. Torbay is a small coastal unitary authority situated midway between Exeter and Plymouth on the south Devon coast. It covers an area of 64 square kilometres with 35 kilometres of coastline and consists of the three towns of Torquay, Paignton and Brixham and a small rural hinterland.

8. The economy of Torbay is largely dependent on tourism, particularly hotels and catering as well as public sector employment. Torbay generally has a low wage economy. Employment is subject to seasonal fluctuation and unemployment is high, significantly above the rate for the south west.

9. Torbay has an estimated population of 132,500 which increases by around 50,000 during the summer holiday season. It is the fifth most densely-populated authority in the south west, with notable areas of deprivation, and is ranked overall as the 94th most deprived local authority out of 354 in England. Children and young people aged 0-19 represent 22.4% of the population. While population within the bay grows at an average of 1200 persons a year, the population aged between 0 and 19 is projected to decline until 2015. On the basis of the last census (2001), 3.2% of the resident population were from black and other minority ethnic communities, which is low and approximately a quarter of the national average. There is however, a proportionately large transient population which produces some distinctive challenges for services in the area.

10. Torbay is working toward achieving Children's Trust arrangements through a local Children's Partnership Board. It has created a Children's Partnership Executive and Change for Children's task groups which have developed the Torbay Children and Young People's Plan. During 2007, a key development for Torbay will be the introduction of four extended service/community cluster sites which will provide hubs for the delivery of the Early Intervention Strategy in East and West Torquay, Paignton and Brixham. The cluster sites will cover a partnership of other schools within the four geographic areas and bring together single multi-agency teams. These, in the first phase, will include education welfare, Connexions, youth service, family support and therapeutic staff. Children's social care will continue to provide specialist provision in a

conventional way until the Early Intervention Strategy becomes more developed.

11. There are 30 primary schools, one infant and one junior school in Torbay and three special schools and a pupil referral unit. The eight secondary schools comprise three comprehensive community colleges, three grammar schools, a voluntary aided church school, and a bilateral school. In December 2006, Torbay Council had 189 children and young people looked after.

12. The local authority leads on the strategy and financial management of the 14 -19 partnership. Other partners are Devon and Cornwall Local Learning and Skills Council, South Devon College of Further Education and all the secondary schools including the three grammar schools. Two work-based learning providers and Connexions are also involved as well as contributions from others.

13. Entry to Employment provision is delivered by one of the work-based learning providers. The South Devon College has specialist provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and has significantly expanded its work-based learning provision this year. One of the three special schools offers post-16 provision. Family learning is delivered by the college at a range of venues across the area.

14. Primary care services, including primary mental health care for children in Torbay are provided by Torbay Care NHS Trust. The South Devon Healthcare NHS Trust provides acute health services to Torbay and the areas of South Hams and Teignbridge. South Devon Healthcare NHS Trust and Devon Partnership NHS Trust currently provide children's mental health services, which will transfer to Devon Primary Care Trust in April 2007. The trusts providing health services to the children of Torbay, including the South West Ambulance Service NHS Trust, fall within South West Strategic Health Authority.

15. There are no young offender institutions in the area.

Summary Report

Outcomes for children and young people

16. **Outcomes for children and young people in Torbay are adequate overall. In some respects, they are good.** Children and young people are generally healthy. Healthy schools targets have been exceeded, but there are rising levels of childhood obesity and the numbers of teenage conceptions remain too high. Those children and young people most at risk are well protected, although many children and young people feel at risk in the community, largely due to a lack of activities and safe places to meet. Most children and young people enjoy their education and make the progress expected of them. Children and young people's educational attainment is above average at Key Stage 3 and at post-16, and is in line with the average at Key

Stage 1. However, in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stages 2 and 4, their attainment is below the national averages. The majority of children and young people have satisfactory opportunities to develop socially and emotionally and make a positive contribution. Most of them are supported well through significant changes in their lives, such as moving schools. Most young people are satisfactorily supported to achieve economic well-being and are well prepared for adult life. A high number of 16-18 year olds are in education, employment or training; the number not doing so is declining and is well below the national average. Achievement of general and vocational A/AS levels or equivalent is above the national average. Success rates at the college are much improved and are high at levels 1 and 2 and at the national average for level 3 for vocational provision. Work-based learning is satisfactory and improving.

The impact of local services

17. The impact of local services in improving outcomes for children and young people is adequate.

Being healthy

18. The work of all local services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate. There are some good features and distinct signs of improvement. Universal health provision overall is good and most national health indicators for children and young people show outcomes that are in line with, or above, national averages. Agencies work well with parents to provide both individualised care and a range of programmes that help parents keep their children healthy.

19. Initiatives to support smoking cessation during pregnancy are adequate. The good care provided by the integrated community and hospital midwifery service facilitates a high number of home births. Healthy lifestyles for children and young people are promoted adequately with some strong features: progress in schools acquiring healthy schools accreditation is good and there are excellent initiatives to promote healthy eating. Increasing rates of childhood obesity have been recognised and a good start has been made in delivering against the 2006 Torbay Obesity Strategy.

20. There is a teenage pregnancy business plan but initiatives have had a slow and inadequate impact on the high level of teenage conceptions. However, school nurses and partners provide good sex and relationship support and education as well as adequate emergency contraception, in a range of settings, for those who seek it. Good drug and alcohol services engage and support young people in treatment effectively. Also, some good initiatives are beginning to be developed to raise the self-esteem and aspirations of young women in general.

21. The combined work of all services in promoting the mental health of children and young people is inadequate overall. Much progress has been made from a very low base in developing a comprehensive child and adolescent

mental health service (CAMHS) based on a clear strategic plan. Although the building blocks are in place, aspects of the service remain underdeveloped. When children and young people access a service from CAMHS, the care that is provided is good but services for those with mental health and learning difficulties, especially for those requiring behavioural interventions, is inadequate, as is the service provided to some 16 and 17 year olds.

22. The health needs of children looked after are met by an effective multi-professional team, and children and young people receive timely and comprehensive health interventions that include identification of potential mental health problems. The health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequately addressed, with some good provision.

Staying safe

23. **The impact of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate.** Those children and young people at highest risk of significant harm generally receive a good service. However, there are no written threshold criteria to access social care services that have been agreed by all agencies, although this is planned. Good progress has been made in improving road safety. Most children and young people are safe in school: there is evidence of effective work to deter bullying, but the council and its partners do not have a published and shared anti-bullying strategy. Some children and young people state that they feel unsafe in the most deprived neighbourhoods where drug misuse proliferates and where they face verbal and physical abuse from other young people. Young people are also concerned by the lack of accessible facilities, activities and safe places to meet in some neighbourhood communities.

24. The Torbay Safeguarding Children Board (TSCB) has made a promising start on child protection issues but it has yet to address the wider safeguarding agenda. Safe staff recruitment processes are generally in place in all agencies, but there is some inconsistency of approach towards staff being allowed to take up posts before Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks have been fully completed and in checking school volunteers. Impressive work has been achieved with adult and child victims of domestic violence, although there is a risk that this progress will not be sustained now that funding for a key post has ended.

25. The volume and pressure of work in the social care intake team is high, which leads to long delays in completion of some assessments, and a lack of appropriate prioritisation for children and young people newly accommodated. Casework practice, though adequate overall, is variable in quality and systematic audit and quality assurance is not yet fully established. Family support workers based at Halswell House family centre are well regarded and their work will be disaggregated into the four new cluster sites from April 2007. There is concern that the lack of 'pump priming' funding for this new early

intervention service could threaten family support worker core provision for statutory casework in the short to medium term. Consistent application of admissions criteria has led to reductions in numbers of children looked after, but there is insufficient placement choice and a need to renew and refocus the placement strategy

26. For those children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who meet the eligibility criteria, there is a good range of services. Those children and young people who fall below this high threshold, but who nevertheless have significant need, find it difficult to access services. There is no overall integrated strategy for the development of services for this group of children and young people.

Enjoying and achieving

27. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is adequate.** There are some significant strengths. Torbay knows its schools well. There has been clear progress in the impact of the strategy for school improvement from the position described in the Ofsted LEA inspection in 2004. No school has been placed in special measures since 2000. The school improvement service is very effective in the short-term, although it has still to improve its challenge and support to schools so that standards rise across all schools in the longer term. Data is used well to identify schools and those pupils who are at risk of not achieving at least average outcomes. Thus support and intervention are generally well targeted and effective. Not enough has been done yet to capitalise on good work in the early years to ensure that children attain standards that match national averages at Key Stages 2 and 4, or to improve the attainment of mobile pupils who move between schools.

28. Strategies for improving attendance and reducing truancy are adequate. The number of permanent and fixed-term exclusions rose in secondary schools in 2005/06. The council has agreed a hard-to-place protocol with the schools, but it has yet to reduce the number of pupils who are excluded. However, provision for pupils who are permanently excluded from school is good.

29. The support for children and young people who are looked after and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate, and most make expected progress. Although attainment for young people who are looked after is below the national average at GCSE for 5+ A*- C grades, a strength is the good performance at the 1+ A*- G level. However, personal education plans are not always completed promptly enough and are not of consistently good quality.

30. Children and young people in Torbay generally enjoy school and schools offer an adequate range of activities and extended school provision. However, whilst the council provides activities such as music and sport, it has not addressed the considerable safety and cost issues that discourage many children and young people in the more deprived areas from participating.

Making a positive contribution

31. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate.** Children and young people are provided with satisfactory opportunities to develop socially and emotionally. They are encouraged to establish positive relationships and many take part in activities that help them to nurture a sense of responsibility and increasing independence. Some good opportunities are provided for children and young people to take part in consultation and to influence decisions that affect them but they do not always hear what happens to their suggestions. School councils exist in nearly all schools and these help to promote citizenship and pride in the school but do not yet focus on the wider community issues in Torbay. The youth service, however, does not sufficiently involve enough young people in developing and running provision.

32. Opportunities for the most vulnerable groups of children and young people to have their views heard are established but are not yet consistently helping to shape policies and services. Representation and support systems for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are improving. However, advocacy for them requires more development.

33. The emerging participation strategy has several examples of good practice to draw on to ensure that children and young people can make a positive contribution to the way all services operate. The Connexions service has been effective in engaging young people in the evaluation and delivery of its service. A range of effective and targeted preventative programmes are in place to reduce anti-social behaviour and the number of young people at risk of offending and who are already known to the Youth Offending Team. Overall, most crime figures are declining, with a corresponding decline in youth nuisance incidents. However, the fear of becoming a victim of crime among young people is high.

Achieving economic well-being

34. **The impact of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.** Overall, children and young people are prepared well for working life and participation in education, employment and training is high for 16-18 year olds. The Connexions service provides good and impartial information, advice and guidance. Post-16 provision in schools is good and although there is variation between the schools, all are improving and value added is good. The quality of education and training at the South Devon College is good. Success rates for work-based learners are satisfactory and improving. Young people from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve well in work-based learning.

35. Despite a slow start, the 14-19 strategy has gained momentum in the last two years. The council has successfully encouraged collaboration: it has been proactive in introducing a wide range of provision to build the confidence of young people, as well as supporting the development of a good choice of

vocational courses. This provision has appropriately focused in the first instance on young people who are at risk of disengaging. The wider vocational curriculum will be extended to Year 11 next year.

36. The availability of childcare places and access to information about them is good. Action to ensure young people have decent housing is effective. Support for care leavers is good and children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given adequate support.

Service management

37. **The management of services for children and young people is adequate.** Partners' ambitions for children's services are clearly expressed in the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP). Priorities are based on a good, high level understanding of needs in the area and are informed to some extent by the views of children and young people. The quality of needs analysis at service levels varies, for example the specific needs of children and young people from black and minority ethnic communities and other minority groups are not routinely identified. The council and its partners are developing the range of services. However, although a children's services plan is in place, its outcomes and targets are not yet clear. Capacity to deliver these priorities is adequate, although there are notable positives, in particular clear leadership, an integrated Children's Services Directorate, and evidence of progress in the five Every Child Matters outcome areas.

38. The children's services department has laid good foundations for the work going forward on the Children's Trust. There is a strong commitment to partnership working. Partner capacity is being used effectively to provide an adequate range of services to children and young people, with a clear focus on meeting individual needs. Value for money is adequate; however, workforce planning, including joint planning, is at an early stage.

39. Performance management across the area is adequate. Performance monitoring and management systems are now in place, and there is evidence of significant progress in the development of performance management in children's social care since it was last inspected in 2005. However, the culture of performance management is not yet strong or consistent and a workforce strategy is required to support the development of the Children's Trust. Children and young people are not routinely involved in service development and the review of service quality.

40. The council's self-assessment reflects its ambition and commitment and broadly demonstrates awareness of its strengths and areas for development; however, the outcomes of services are not yet consistent enough to support the council's and its partners' self evaluation other than in the areas of enjoying and achieving and economic well-being. The council has made important progress in establishing its senior management structure and a clear strategic direction. Despite resource challenges, capacity to improve further is adequate.

Grades

Grades awarded:

4: outstanding; 3: good; 2: adequate; 1: inadequate

	Local services overall	Council services	Health services
Being healthy	2		
Staying safe	2		
Enjoying and achieving	2		
Making a positive contribution	2		
Achieving economic well-being	3		
Service management	2		
Capacity to improve	2	2	
Children's services		2	
The education service		2	
The social care services for children		2	
The health service for children			2

Recommendations

For immediate action

The council and its partners should:

- ensure the momentum of the Early Intervention Strategy is maintained and that its family support services are appropriately resourced without jeopardising the progress made in statutory provision in specialist services
- implement written threshold criteria for access to social care services that are agreed across all agencies
- ensure that consistent and timely referral protocols are in place between children's social care teams.

For action over the next six months

- Fully implement regular independent file audits and quality assurance processes.
- Develop an anti-bullying strategy that is used and monitored across all settings including school and college sites.
- Develop strategies and provision to reduce the high fear of crime among children and young people, particularly in the most deprived neighbourhoods.
- Renew the 2005-07 Placement Strategy to ensure that children looked after receive improved choice and access to high quality placements.
- Develop and implement a strategy for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is agreed across all agencies and ensures more inclusive access criteria to sustainable services.
- Ensure a reduction in the numbers of pupils excluded from school, particularly in the secondary phase.
- Improve the educational offer for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged over 19 years.
- Ensure that all young people aged 16 -17 years have access to appropriate CAMHS and, that all children and young people with learning difficulties have full access to CAMHS.
- Improve the coordination and impact of the Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

For action in the longer term

- Re-focus school improvement and early years' work on improving the attainment of mobile pupils and the attainment of children at the Foundation Stage.
- Complete and implement the Participation Strategy and particularly improve post-consultation feedback to children and young people.
- Ensure that an effective workforce strategy is devised and implemented.

Main report

Outcomes for children and young people

41. **Outcomes for children and young people in Torbay are adequate overall.**

42. **Children and young people in Torbay are generally healthy.** In a survey for this review, 96% of those children who responded stated they were very or quite healthy. Healthy schools targets have been exceeded, although base line data indicates rising levels of childhood obesity.

43. More women smoke during pregnancy than nationally, but breast feeding rates are good and numbers of babies weighing less than 2.5kg at birth are higher than in similar areas although average for England. Uptake of immunisations is good, higher than nationally at age two and average at age five. The level of infant and child mortality is in line with national rates and the incidence of measles is low. However, levels of teenage conceptions are still too high against a declining national average trend, and Torbay is not on course to meet the 2010 target. Outcomes for young people with substance misuse problems are positive and include appropriate identification and treatment.

44. Access for children and young people to CAMHS is inadequate. A below average number are being seen in under four weeks, with some non-specialist cases being seen after 26 weeks. Some 16 to 17 year olds with no dedicated CAMHS provision are being treated within adult provision.

45. The number of looked after children and young people receiving an annual health assessment and seeing a dentist is good and improving. Targeted screening lead to early identification of mental health difficulties in looked after children. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive good assessment and packages of services up to the age of five. Children and young people with life limiting or chronic conditions receive good individual community nursing care.

46. **Children and young people in Torbay appear generally safe.** There have been no recent road deaths and serious accident levels have reduced.

However, some children and young people do not feel safe in the more deprived neighbourhoods, those aged 14-24 are at the highest risk of being victims of crime. Those children at highest risk of significant harm are protected by clear child protection procedures. Numbers of children on the child protection register have reduced and are now in line with comparators and national averages; all are allocated to qualified social workers. However, for those children and young people whose assessment is incomplete the wait can be considerable and potentially increase risk for them. The proportion of children and young people who are assessed within timescales has improved and is now in line with comparators and national averages.

47. Good progress has been made in reducing the number of looked after children, although numbers have increased recently. Looked after children are generally safe and adequately protected from abuse and exploitation. A high proportion of them are in foster care or placed for adoption, and the number of those newly placed more than 20 miles from home has significantly reduced. In 2005-06, the number of adoptions of looked after children was very good, although the outturn for 2006-07 appears less favourable. Most children are in stable short-term placements, but both placement choice and long-term placement stability need to improve. Reviews of looked after children are conducted thoroughly and within timescales.

48. The majority of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities live in safe environments. Detailed multi-disciplinary assessments are conducted for them, although again some assessments are subject to delay. There is a good range of support services for children with the most complex needs. Parents or carers of children with lower, though significant, levels of need experience difficulties in accessing services.

49. **Children and young people mostly achieve adequately, enjoy their education and feel safe and happy at school.** The picture of attainment is complicated by the high mobility of pupils between schools in Torbay and from outside the area. At Key Stage 3 and at post-16, pupils' attainment is above average, but at Key Stages 2 and 4 it is below. At Key Stage 1, it has declined but, overall, is in line with national averages.

50. Those children and young people looked after by Torbay Council mostly make the progress expected of them; therefore, although attainment at GCSE for 5+ A*- C grades is below the national average, there is good performance at the 1+ A*- G level. However, a few remain without a personal education plan for too long and not all plans are of good quality. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make adequate progress. The very small numbers of children and young people from black and minority ethnic communities perform similarly to their peers in the local population.

51. Attendance rates were below average in primary and secondary schools in 2006, partly due to a virus that hit many schools in the spring term. The number of permanent exclusions fell in primary schools in 2006 from five to four and fixed-term exclusions were reduced from 129 in 2005 to 86 in 2006. Over the same period, permanent exclusions in secondary schools have increased from nine to 23 and there has been a significant rise in fixed-term exclusions.

52. Children and young people have an adequate range of opportunities to make decisions and take personal responsibility and the majority make a satisfactory contribution to their communities.

There are some examples of good outcomes from peer mentoring arrangements. Most children and young people are supported through significant changes in their lives, including moving schools. Opportunities for the development and support of good relationships between parents and young children are good but limited for the parents and carers of 13 to 19 year olds. Young people surveyed report that they have an impact, through school councils, on the running of school affairs. Some services and projects are providing good opportunities for children and young people to have their say though this is not widespread. Young people also report that they do not always receive feedback after their views are given in consultation. Most young people avoid anti-social behaviour. Young people involved with the criminal justice system are well served by the youth offending service with many individual examples of good outcomes for them.

53. Children and young people who are looked after have good opportunities for involvement in plans that affect their lives individually and some participation in service developments. The advocacy service is well regarded by children and young people. Opportunities for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make a positive contribution are adequate. Although concerns are expressed over the lack of advocacy services for them, a recently commissioned service from the Children's Society has started to address this issue.

54. Children and young people are able to achieve economic well-being and are prepared well for working life. A high number of 16 -18 year olds are in education, employment or training; the number not doing so is declining and is well below the national average.

55. Achievement of general and vocational A/AS levels or equivalent is above the national average. Although there are variations in the performance between schools, they are improving and most young people achieve above the level expected of them. Success rates at the college are much improved and are high at levels 1 and 2 and at the national average for level 3 for vocational provision. Work-based learning is satisfactory and improving, especially at the college. Greater collaboration has improved the range and appropriateness of provision for young people aged 14 -16.

56. The council, working closely with voluntary agencies, responds well to providing young people with emergency and longer term accommodation. The percentage of looked after children and care leavers involved in education, employment and training is above the national average. Children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given adequate support. The transfer arrangements for most of these young people to education and training at the age of 16 is good, but, at 19, the range of provision is narrower and the opportunities that are available are not well articulated to parents and carers.

The impact of local services

Being healthy

57. **The work of all services in securing the health of children and young people is adequate.** Parents and carers receive good support to keep their children healthy. Good universal provision includes a proactive health visiting service that works well with parents and other agencies to provide both individualised care and a range of programmes to support parents in keeping their children healthy and active. There are also helpful groups supporting parents whose children present behavioural issues.

58. A fully integrated community and hospital midwifery service provides good care that includes a high number of home births, and breast-feeding is well supported. Initiatives to support smoking cessation, specifically during pregnancy, are adequate at present, with more targeted interventions imminent.

59. Healthy lifestyles are promoted adequately overall with some good initiatives such as the 'Five a day project'. This has continued to encourage healthy eating beyond the life of the initial project. Good progress has been made in the proportion of schools achieving healthy schools accreditation, with 38 of 43 achieving the award. The rate of childhood obesity is increasing: this has been recognised and a start made in delivering improvements identified within the 2006 Torbay Obesity Strategy.

60. The activities arising from the teenage pregnancy business plan have had an inadequate impact on reducing the high and static level of teenage conceptions. Audit information is beginning to inform service development. Robust partnerships are in place but have yet to provide the training for all youth workers to deliver a condom distribution scheme. However, a good start has been made in delivering this scheme through the youth and youth offending services. Sexual health services are not yet sufficiently accessible to young people but plans are in place to co-locate them. There is adequate provision of emergency contraception and some good initiatives are beginning to be developed to raise the self-esteem and aspirations of young women. A good sex and relationship education programme is delivered to young people in secondary schools, and a well-regarded school nursing service provides individual support to children and young people.

61. Actions taken to improve children and young people's physical health are good, especially at Torbay hospital where the good standard of provision includes an adolescent inpatient unit. A Stay Safe bus offers a good and responsive safe haven for young people, and includes minor injuries facilities.

62. Services to promote the mental health of children and young people are adequate or better in a few areas but inadequate overall. Much progress has been made from a low base in developing a comprehensive CAMHS from the strategic plan. The building blocks of this plan are in place but some aspects of services remain under developed and under resourced, and are therefore unable to improve overall outcomes for children and young people. However, recent appointments should provide the impetus to progress a jointly commissioned service.

63. Although there are some good primary and early intervention elements of CAMHS, a lack of capacity at a specialist levels means that children and young people do not always receive an appropriate or timely service. When they are able to access a service from CAMHS, the care provided is good; however, access to services can be difficult because referral criteria are not explicit and there is no single point of entry. Work is underway to clarify referral pathways. It is unacceptable that some young people aged between 16 and 17 do not receive a service from a dedicated CAMHS but are treated within the adult mental health service. There is also an inadequate service for children and young people who have mental health and learning difficulties especially for those requiring behavioural interventions. Integration of the learning disabilities nursing team into specialist CAMHS is planned to produce improved services. Good drug and alcohol services are effectively engaging young people in treatment, and vulnerable young people are screened and supported well.

64. The health needs of looked after children are addressed well and they receive timely and comprehensive health interventions. Good individual work with children, young people and their carers includes promoting healthy lifestyles and sexual health awareness. The specialist assessment and therapeutic service and a mental health worker for looked after children provide good support for their emotional and mental health.

65. The health needs of children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are adequately addressed. However, the absence of a strategic plan for this group of children and young people means that priorities and a structure for service development are not defined. Despite this, a Team Around the Child project currently provides good multi-agency packages of care to children under five with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. A community nursing team provides good and individualised community-based nursing care to children and young people with a range of life-limiting or chronic conditions, including good care packages for young people with diabetes and cystic fibrosis who are making the transition to adult services. Separate therapy services provide adequately for children and young people. A good jointly-funded integrated equipment service provides a prompt service.

Staying safe

66. **The work of all local services in keeping children and young people safe is adequate.** The range of information available to inform children and young people about key risks to their safety is adequate with some examples of good practice. There has been a sustained achievement in the reduction of deaths and serious injuries of children and young people on the roads and road safety is addressed well in schools. However, in the more deprived neighbourhoods, there is consistent evidence from children and young people that they do not feel safe where drugs proliferate and where they often face verbal or physical abuse from other young people who have nothing better to do. Local places, such as parks, are seen as unsafe, due to poor lighting. Similarly the general lack of suitable facilities mean that young people gather in groups in the streets, and are perceived as threatening by other children and young people.

67. Impressive work with victims of domestic abuse has been achieved, and multi-agency risk assessment conferences are embedded. Adult survivors have contributed to raising multi-agency awareness of domestic abuse issues, and groups to provide support for children who have experienced domestic abuse are proving successful. Continuation of this work and progress, however, is not assured due to proposed changes to funding, and the subsequent loss of the dedicated domestic violence prevention officer role.

68. The volume of referrals of children in need to social care services is now reducing to a level in line with comparators. However, there are no written eligibility criteria for access to social care, agreed across all agencies, which leads to a level of inappropriate referrals. Referrals to social care are not always responded to by written confirmation of the action taken, although this is being addressed.

69. Although 70% of initial and core assessments are completed within timescales, there are unacceptably long delays in completion of the remainder. Transfer protocols are not consistently adhered to, and rely on negotiation between managers. Cases of children newly-accommodated remain in the intake team until after their four-month review, resulting in looked after children receiving a lower priority than child protection cases. Case files examined showed significant variation in the quality of practice, and, in one case sampled, an important child protection issue had been overlooked. Management oversight of case files has improved through a programme of independent file auditing but this is not yet fully embedded and there is a lack of quality assurance processes.

70. CRB checks are effected appropriately with regard to staff in statutory agencies and appropriate and valued guidance is given to schools by the Safeguarding Unit. However, some staff are being allowed to begin work before CRB checks have been fully completed and there is some inconsistency in the application of the process of checks on school volunteers.

71. Agency collaboration to safeguard children according to the requirements of current government guidance is adequate. Good relationships between agencies and individual workers and managers are evident, but lack of clarity about thresholds leads to some difference in the understanding of referral processes and agency responsibilities. All children and young people on the child protection register are allocated to qualified social workers and the Safeguarding Unit has a very good overview of child protection practice and processes. There is, however, significant difficulty in achieving quorate child protection conferences and core group meetings due to the lack of attendance by agencies other than social care, but this is being addressed. Parents do not consistently contribute to child protection conference reports or see them in advance of conferences. In some cases, the approaches used by all agencies to support families are not experienced as being supportive by the families themselves.

72. The TSCB has solid foundations and strong leadership. There are good relationships between agencies, and appropriate representation on the TSCB. The Board's concentration on ensuring that child protection processes are robust has led to improvements, although the broader safeguarding focus is yet to be developed.

73. There is a good Missing Children's Protocol in place. Processes for supporting missing children (aged 0-16) through joint arrangements between police, Checkpoint and social care services are positive, and work to further improve the process is ongoing. A good start has also been made in establishing sound processes for tracking children missing from school.

74. Significant improvements in the recruitment and retention of social workers have enabled Torbay's children's services to take effective action to reduce the number of children who are looked after. Most looked after children have an allocated social worker. A more rigorous process of management decision-making has ensured the consistent application of admission to care criteria. Independent review officers maintain a very good overview of the safety and quality of care for looked after children, with good levels of participation in reviews by children and young people. The service also undertakes case file audits and is developing an enquiry and analysis process when children and young people's care placements are disrupted.

75. The foster care service is good and foster carers feel well supported. The supply of placements is only adequate, however, and some individual foster carers take significantly more children than the approved number. The Placement Strategy developed in 2005 has led to some improvement in placement availability, but does not indicate how the continuing pressures on the system will be addressed. Arrangements to assure safe and appropriate care placements for children and young people with agencies outside the council's own provision are effective. Black and minority ethnic children are over-represented in the looked after population, although the reasons for this are unclear. Diversity training for foster carers has not yet been implemented.

76. There is a good range of services for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the threshold criteria for access to these services is high and there is significant discontent expressed by parents of children and young people with high level need who do not meet access criteria. The 'Team around the child' provides very good integrated services to pre-school children, although continued funding of this service remains uncertain. Services for school age children are delivered through Torbay children's disability service. Packages of care are well co-ordinated, although there can be delay in completing assessments. There is an adequate range of day and overnight respite services for children with higher levels of need.

77. Transitions to adult services are inconsistent across the range of needs. Young people with learning difficulties are well supported in the move to adult services, while young people with complex needs, including physical disability and mental health difficulties, may not meet the specific access criteria for individual adult teams.

Enjoying and achieving

78. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people to enjoy their education and recreation and to achieve well is adequate.** There are some significant strengths. Parents and carers receive good support and they are generally very positive about the support they receive. Particularly good support is available in Sure Start/children's centres. Information about education is easily accessible on the council's website and from pamphlets and leaflets.

79. The programme of early years development, particularly training, is effecting some progress. The strong early years and portage teams are knowledgeable and effective, and work well in partnership with all settings and families.

80. School improvement services are very sound with significant strengths. However, the council has still to identify a strategy and clear priorities that will help reduce variation in standards across its schools and shift attainment towards a consistently improving trend to match, and overtake, national standards. Nevertheless, Torbay knows its schools well and relationships with them are now very good. There are no schools in Ofsted's categories of concern, nor have there been since 2000. Good analysis of data has led to effectively differentiated support and intervention from strong primary and secondary strategy teams. The focus on borderline pupils between key national curriculum levels, using the intensive support programme, is bearing fruit but insufficient attention has been devoted to the attainment of mobile pupils, who have a significant negative impact on overall levels of attainment.

81. The council's work on improving attendance and reducing exclusions is adequate. The recently introduced system to manage attendance is sensible and helpfully graduated. Effective analysis of the causes of absence is used to

determine the support given on a school-by-school basis. Good progress has been made in establishing a hard to place protocol, which includes the grammar schools and agreement over its funding and management. There remains, however, the issue of the two or three maintained schools bearing the brunt of placing permanently excluded pupils. The introduction of the universal curriculum is beginning to have positive effect on students' motivation in Year 10. However, they have not yet achieved a significant reduction in fixed-term exclusions in secondary schools and the lack of support for associated transport costs discourages schools from agreeing non-exclusion solutions.

82. Children and young people educated other than at school generally achieve well in relation to their capabilities. Provision for pupils who do not attend schools is good. The pupil referral unit was judged to be good with outstanding management in its inspection. There are good levels of reintegration of pupils in Key Stage 3 and pupils make reasonable educational progress to GCSE level and beyond into further education and employment. The interim tuition service is good. All children in this group currently have more than 20 hours of education.

83. The support for children who are looked after is adequate with some strengths. Generally, those in primary education progress well and are particularly well supported during their transition from the primary to the secondary phase. As a result, most of these young people make expected progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 and attain well at the GCSE 1+ A*- G level, even though attainment at higher grades is below average. Foster carers are well informed and enabled to access leisure activities for their children with good information about what is available and concessionary rates. Increasing stability of placements in order to improve results at Key Stages 3 and 4 is rightly a priority. Although progress has been made to ensure all looked after children have personal education plans (PEPs) promptly, some children are without a PEP for too long and not all the PEPs seen during the inspection were of good quality.

84. The support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is adequate. Weaknesses are known and are being addressed. The number of education statements is too high but reducing. Numbers of pupils attending special schools are higher than national and statistical comparators but special school outreach work is increasing. Attendance rates for children with special educational needs were below the national average for both primary and secondary phases in 2006. The early years' inclusion service is a strength.

85. Children's and young people's access to a range of activities and recreational opportunities is adequate but with some significant weaknesses. Despite a wide range of extended school activities, music activities and other recreational opportunities, young people are concerned about lack of up-to-date shops, youth cafés and places to socialise. Sometimes they are frustrated by the cost of activities and the lack of transport.

Making a positive contribution

86. **The work of local services in helping children and young people to contribute to society is adequate overall.** The quality of support provided to most children and young people to develop socially and emotionally is adequate. There is good co-ordination of personal, social, health and citizenship education in schools, but its quality is inconsistent. Support in developing positive relationships for parents and carers of young children is good but there is too little support for parents of 13-19 year olds. Where these have been provided, there is evidence of successful early intervention practices. The youth service has not been effective in recent years, but significant effort has gone into making improvements in the service over the last year and it is now adequate and beginning to make a more strategic contribution. There was a slow start in addressing the challenges set out in Youth Matters but some good planning has emerged. There is currently some uncertainty among staff and partners as to how this work will be affected by the decision to move to a cluster system, which will include youth workers and Connexions staff.

87. Most Torbay schools have a school council and these are having a significant effect in enabling children and young people to contribute positively to the running of their schools. Children and young people generally feel empowered to deal appropriately with day-to-day issues such as bullying, healthy eating and environmental issues that affect them in their schools. The school councils vary considerably in their approach and have yet to make a significant contribution to their wider communities.

88. Children and young people are well supported at key points of transition in their lives, but there are few arrangements in place for focused consultation with those from black and minority ethnic and religious groups. Transition to school is generally well managed; most transfers to secondary school are smooth and support for young people transferring to post-16 training is good. The arrangements to support young carers are good, though the service lacks the capacity to respond fully and promptly to the needs of them all. Support for young people experiencing traumatic events and difficult periods is good. In general, children and young people receive good support in managing change and in coping with challenging periods in their lives.

89. A strong commitment is shown by all the agencies to enabling children and young people to make a positive contribution to their communities. The extent to which children and young people participate in decision making is adequate. The needs and views of children and young people are taken very seriously by the services that they use, and there is promising work being done within the participation working group. However, young people say that they do not always get feedback after they are consulted. Torbay's elected members and managers have provided some good events to try to engage children and young people in the design and evaluation of services offered to them. Opportunities for young people to have a say in the decisions that affect them are often good in individual projects and programmes. This is seen in the very

effective Take Part project, the Young View Forums and the Youth E Panel. However, relatively low participation in the youth service in recent years has seriously hindered young people's capacity to make a positive contribution and only a minority of children and young people are engaged in decision making beyond their school or project. This is improving as capacity in the youth service increases. Some young people are actively encouraged to volunteer and support their community and become active in addressing environmental issues; others are encouraged to be active citizens, including standing for offices such as the UK Youth Parliament, but this is under-developed.

90. Overall, the work in Torbay to deal with anti-social behaviour is satisfactory and the measures in place to identify children at risk from, or involvement in, anti-social behaviour are good. There are several projects or programmes having a good impact on anti-social behaviour and there is some good partnership work with the police. Children and young people have mixed feelings about the area in which they live; some are proud of it but many fear crime and anti-social behaviour and feel that their future career prospects will require them to move away. They highlight expensive leisure and entertainment activities, and a lack of information about what is available as examples of why it is difficult to have a strong sense of community. The authority is right to focus on the needs of young people visiting from other countries mainly for language courses. It is, therefore, particularly surprising that there is not a systematic recording and analysis of racist incidents in schools and other settings. The lack of information in general about the black and minority ethnic population in Torbay is also of concern.

91. The quality of work in the youth offending service is good with some excellent projects. The service is an effective and integral part of Torbay's emerging Early Intervention Strategy. There are several teams involved in the delivery of services to children and young people considered to be at risk of offending. Examples of excellent practice include the Youth Inclusion and Support Panel supporting 64 young adolescents and the new Youth Inclusion Programme focusing on the 30 most at risk young people. The contemporaneous youth offending service inspection reflects favourably on the quality and impact of work done by the service.

92. Most children who are looked after receive good specialist support from a range of services and they have good opportunities to be individually involved when key decisions are made about their lives. Their views are taken seriously and they have confidence in the effective advocacy service. They are supported well as they prepare to lead independent adult lives. A high percentage of children and young people contribute to reviews and consultation formats are accessible and elicit a good response from young people. Children and young people's improvement groups enable some participation by looked after children in service developments. Children's Rights Torbay delivers a well-used advocacy service and runs effective participation events.

93. Multi-agency support for children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to make a positive contribution is adequate. Some voluntary organisations and parents state that there is a lack of advocacy services for these children and young people especially those with behavioural and learning difficulties. They generally have adequate opportunities to express their views within the formal review processes and when they transfer from one setting to another or move from children's to adult services.

Achieving economic well-being

94. **The work of all local services in helping children and young people achieve economic well-being is good.** Parents and carers have access to good quality childcare. The rate of growth of childcare places overall is good, particularly after-school care. Effective family learning is improving the literacy and numeracy competencies of parents and carers and helping them to better access and understand information. Access to information on the range of benefits available to parents and carers is good, especially through the children's centres, Connexions and the council's own information service and website, though information on this web-site requires further development in relation to child care.

95. Participation rates in education, employment and training are high for 16-18 year olds and the number whose status is not known is very low. Consequently, the number not in education, employment or training is low and declining. Participation of known teenage mothers in education, employment and training is improving, and increased by almost 8% in 2006 compared to the previous year.

96. Overall success rates post 16 for general and vocational A/AS levels or equivalent are above the national average although there are variations across schools, with attainment rates highest at the three grammar schools. At the two maintained schools with a sixth form and the voluntary aided school, the trend is an improving one and value added is good. Recent inspection outcomes for two of these schools graded sixth form provision and achievement and standards as good.

97. Success rates for work-based learning are satisfactory and improving at the South Devon College, where performance has improved significantly since the last inspection. Success rates at the college are high at levels 1 and 2 and satisfactory, but improving, at level 3 for vocational courses. Links with employers through South Devon College are good. It also now offers business incubation units to encourage new businesses. All pupils in Year 10 take part in work experience opportunities. However, community regeneration projects are yet to have a significant effect on widening employment opportunities for young people locally.

98. Although the 14-19 Strategy was slow to get off the ground, it has gathered momentum in the last 18 months. A good range of vocational and other supportive provision is available for 14 -16 year olds, particularly for those

in Year 10. The strategy caters more successfully for lower-ability learners and those with the potential to disengage from learning, offering them a good range of flexible and tailored pathways to fit their needs. Exclusions in year 10 have dropped by 23% since this provision was introduced in 2005. The council played a major role in encouraging this effective collaboration between schools, the college, work-based learning providers and voluntary agencies to provide this curriculum. Achievements on the Increased Flexibility Programme, offered in addition to the wider vocational curriculum, are good for both Years 10 and 11.

99. Post-16 collaboration is less well developed but there is already some sharing of provision. A new web prospectus for post-16 provision has just been launched and there is strong collaborative work to develop the specialised diplomas for 2008. Online individual learning plans are being developed which should help to share information about young people between providers at the transition stage. The use of data to target interventions for further improvement at post -16 is underdeveloped.

100. Emergency procedures and the referral process for young people with housing needs are good. Successful measures are in place to house the most vulnerable, with good multi-agency co-operation. There is good support for young people with high dependency needs through the Foyer, Galway House. Floating support is provided to young people who need it, particularly those in the community. Tracking the destinations of some young people who leave the accommodation arranged for them by the council is underdeveloped and some young people stay too long in bed and breakfast accommodation.

101. The number of households accepted as homeless and in priority need is below the national average and there is more local authority housing available than nationally. There is a shortage of social housing and to some extent this is being offset by an increase in the use of private accommodation. The trend is upwards in the provision of affordable homes.

102. Pathway planning for care leavers is good and is well used to help them make the right decisions for transition at post -16. Support at all levels for care leavers is good and the percentage of looked after children and care leavers engaged in education, employment and training at 19 years is above the national average. Accommodation arrangements for care leavers are good with the number of care leavers at age 19 living in suitable accommodation well above the national average. None are living in bed and breakfast accommodation. Good support is provided for families to prevent young people moving into care through the Early Intervention Team, especially Family Group Conferencing.

103. Transition planning is good for most children and young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is less well developed for those with multiple disabilities where there is multi -agency involvement as it is not clear which is the lead agency. Post -16, there is good, specialist, well resourced

provision at South Devon College, and entry to employment is offered by a local training provider. In addition to the range of options offered by the three special schools, one of the maintained schools is a centre for young people with a hearing impairment. A community school project to improve attainment for 14-16 year olds and the new vocational curriculum has done much to improve opportunities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Advice, guidance and support are good and some families are supported through direct payments arrangements, although information on the availability of this service is not publicised widely enough to families and carers.

104. Participation and overall success rates in work-based learning for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are higher than the national average. The range of provision post -16 is currently adequate but will not be so in the future due to the increasing numbers of young people with autistic spectrum disorder with statements of educational need for whom staying at school post-16 is not a viable option. Opportunities post-19 for vulnerable young people are not articulated well, especially to parents and carers.

Service management

105. **The management of services for children and young people is adequate.** Most of the necessary building blocks are now in place, but, many of these are not fully developed and consequently are not yet making an impact.

106. The ambition of the council and its partners for children and young people is adequate. The CYPP provides an overview of ambitions for children and young people in Torbay that is effectively linked to the corporate plan and community strategy. Milestones and targets are included but not in a consistent or measurable way. The CYPP sets out the relationship between universal, preventative and specialist services and provides a clearly stated and shared vision for children and young people in Torbay. Partners work together in the Children's Partnership Board appropriately. They understand and are committed to the CYPP's key objectives. However, the engagement of all stakeholders in its implementation is at an early stage of development. The CYPP is based on a high level understanding of the needs of children and young people in the area, including for groups at risk of disadvantage. The quality of needs analysis at service level varies. For example the specific needs of children and young people from black and minority ethnic communities or other minority groups are not routinely identified. There are some examples of clear strategies to support ambitions, for example the development of integrated working through cluster groups and the targeted Youth Inclusion Programme, but there is also much that is as yet under development or to be started.

107. The council and its partners provide effective leadership for children's services in Torbay. Political leadership by the lead member for children's services, the mayor and a cross-party group of 'champions' is committed and visible. Communication is not yet consistent or fully effective and front line staff

have variable understanding about the way in which the CYPP will be developed. The council and its partners have a range of consultation mechanisms in place to inform policy and strategy. These vary in their success in engaging hard-to-reach groups and it is not always clear what impact consultation has as feedback is not regularly given. This means the council cannot demonstrate that it is actively listening to all of its communities and responding effectively to their views.

108. Prioritisation is adequate. Following its first CYPP, the council recognised that it had not structured its priorities in a helpful way and partners have now reduced the original 86 priorities to five key areas. This reduction is useful, enabling a better focus to be achieved. A well-established process ensures that business plans address other important areas that fall outside the five key priorities.

109. The council and its partners have maintained a good focus on service delivery during a challenging transitional period. The new children's services division was created in April 2006. Work on integration of education and social care, together with the groundwork for the Children's Trust, has been effectively managed since then, minimising any negative impact on front line services. The development of the first phase of children's centres in areas of disadvantage demonstrates a targeted approach to tackling inequalities. Recording of the needs of children and their families is generally adequate and information is shared with other agencies appropriately. There are some effective inter-agency arrangements for planning and reviewing provision around cases.

110. The council and its partners have adequate capacity to deliver better outcomes for children and young people. The Director of Children's Services is now well established at the head of the combined Children's Service Directorate and has wide support among partners. Appointment of the senior management structure has only recently been completed and beginning to impact on service delivery. To ensure wider political involvement, a cross-party group of five 'member champions' has been appointed to work with the five assistant directors to provide a clear lead on each 'Every Child Matters' outcome. There are no significant areas of staff shortage, but some service areas require a review of how resources can best meet demand, for example the youth service, intake and other social care teams. There is evidence of safer recruiting practices being given a high focus. Workforce planning, including jointly with partners, is at an early stage of development. Consequently, the council can have little confidence that it will have the human resources needed to deliver its service plans within an affordable medium-term financial plan.

111. Capacity is being built through extensive use of partnerships. There is some involvement with voluntary and community groups, especially around early years and through the Children's Fund arrangements. Children's Trust arrangements are being actively developed and are on course for delivery in 2008, building on the experience of the successful development of the local Adult Care Trust. The council and its partners are pursuing a strategy of co-locating professionals from different agencies, which means that services can respond more flexibly and quickly to meet the needs of individual children.

112. Financial capacity is adequate overall. A projected overspend in children's services has been effectively addressed while protecting front-line services. This has been through a combination of additional investment in areas of high demand and cost reduction, for example through more efficient commissioning of residential care services for children and young people. The forward picture for children's services' finances is tight, and Children's Services have to contribute toward corporate savings. However, this is against a background where the council spends more on children's services than its funding formula indicates and budget proposals indicate the service is receiving further investment. The link between the key five priorities and budget recommendations is demonstrable. The budget process for 2007-08 has identified further investment in early intervention services, which has improved focus on preventative work. However, budgets are still historically based; as a result changes and investments have largely been at the margins. It is not yet clear how the council will balance the effective maintenance of its specialist social care services whilst at the same time meeting the additional investment required in the development of its Early Intervention Strategy.

113. Performance management is adequate. There is evidence of significant progress in the development of performance management in children's social care since the 2005 inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection, but, overall, the culture of performance management is not strong. The council and partners have reasonable systems in place to enable them each to manage their performance, but these are not all well established and joint performance management is embryonic. The council has made good progress in the implementation of an Integrated Children's System and there is a local expectation that this will assist the effective oversight of casework. The council's PARIS information system is not yet fully implemented and data is not yet being used consistently to help front-line managers. A corporate system of performance improvement meetings is in place, which improves the involvement of councillors in managing performance and complements the scrutiny system. Robust information on performance is regularly shared with councillors and areas of weakness are identified and action plans developed. However, business plans are not consistently using SMART (specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and timetabled) targets. This means the council and its partners are not consistently able to measure and manage their progress.

114. There is no clear and consistent approach to developing pilots for new services their evaluation, rollout and funding, or associated exit strategies. This has led to inconsistencies in delivery and to crisis management when external funding ends. There are good examples of vulnerable children and young people, and their carers being involved in planning, reviewing and evaluating their individual services, but this is not universal. Participation of service users in developing services is at an early stage of development

115. Value for money is adequate. Education and social care spend is broadly in line with similar councils. Budget management is improving and the focus on value for money is developing. Some benchmarking is undertaken, including for costs, but is not routinely used across all services. There is limited development of pooled budgets and joint services. Most budgets are, however, aligned with health partners. Commissioning arrangements are satisfactory although there is much to do, in particular on using needs analysis, identifying the service's contribution to strategic objectives, and developing longer-term funding arrangements with providers. Joint commissioning is also at an early stage, but some significant procurement work has been done with neighbouring councils resulting in reduced costs for residential placements, and the council has plans to further increase the use of local authority foster care to deliver better value for money.

Annex: The children and young people's section of the corporate assessment report

1. Torbay council and its partner's performance in this area is adequate overall. The council's use of resources is adequate, and against a context of financial stringency, is about to develop joint commissioning to allocate resources towards the areas of highest need and priority. A projected overspend in children's services has been effectively addressed whilst maintaining front-line services. The council's youth offending services are good with some excellent projects. The youth service's performance has not been effective, though this is being addressed and there are some recent signs of improvement. Most children and young people are healthy and safe and those most at risk are well protected. Services to support children and young people are adequate overall and are contributing toward positive outcomes.

2. The Children's Partnership's ambitions are adequate and address current challenges in its five key priorities. The council has effectively managed the transition to an integrated children's social care and education service while maintaining stable services. The building blocks for Children's Trust development are now in place. There is political support and commitment to further improve outcomes for children and young people. Overall, the council and its partners provide effective leadership for children's services. Management of services is adequate overall, with some examples of good managers and staff making a difference. Children's social care has made notable improvements in performance since it was last inspected.

3. The council is building capacity through current and planned use of partnerships. The development of the first phase of children's centres in disadvantaged areas demonstrates partnership commitment and a targeted approach. Plans to develop an early intervention strategy show much partnership commitment and promise. However, it is unclear how the council will balance reductions in the cost of its specialist social care services against additional investment in early intervention initiatives whilst improving outcomes for the most children and young people.

4. The council is collaborating with its partners to promote a clear focus on health education and preventative programmes. Good progress has been made on the number of schools achieving 'Healthy Schools' accreditation; however this is against the context of rising rates of childhood obesity and much remains to be done. Activities arising from the Teenage Pregnancy Plan have had an inadequate effect on reducing the high levels of teenage conception. Similarly, the CAMHS service is inadequate overall. Although there is evidence of some good provision and progress, there is still much to do.

5. Children and young people most at risk from abuse are well protected through good local multi-agency child protection arrangements. The Torbay Safeguarding Children Board has yet to prioritise the broader safeguarding

issues in Torbay. There is a lack of published eligibility criteria for risk and need, which inhibits a clear understanding of thresholds for intervention and integrated service development. For looked after children, services generally work well together to produce positive outcomes. There is, however, a shortage of placement choice and the council's Placement Strategy needs renewal. Care leavers are generally well supported.

6. The availability of early years provision and child-care places is good overall, though children's progress towards achievement of early learning goals remains below the national average. The quality of support to achieve good provision in schools is adequate with some strengths. However, there is inconsistency in the standards and attainment achieved by children and young people across schools, in particular attainment at the Foundation Stage and at Key Stages 2 and 4, which is below the national average. Overall, children and young people who are looked after or have a learning difficulty or disability make adequate educational progress.

7. There is adequate support overall for children and young people to develop socially and emotionally and make a positive contribution. Most young people behave responsibly. Young people involved with the criminal justice system are well served by the youth offending service with many examples of good outcomes for them. Opportunities for young people to be involved in decision making on issues that are relevant to them are adequate overall. The council and its partners are about to implement a participation strategy and to date much consultation has occurred though its outcomes are not always clear to participants.

8. The proportion of young people in education, employment and training is above the national average, including those young people who have been looked after. Achievement of general and vocational A/AS levels or equivalent is above the national average and success rates at college are also generally above average. Young people receive good advice and guidance through the Connexions Strategy. The council and its partners have collaborated effectively to extend and appropriately target the range of 14 -19 provision. Support for care leavers is good. Effective action has been taken to ensure that young people have access to decent housing.